

Effective Screening Interviews

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Screening Interview?

- Duration: ~60 min
- Medium: Skype
- Outcome: Invite for on-site interview or not

■ HR Communication ■ > SCREENING < ■ On-Site Interview



Cultural vs Technical

- What to evaluate:
 - Cultural fit
 - Technical skills
 - Both?
- If both, in which order?
- How much time to spend on each of them?

Previous Process 1/2

- Heavy emphasis on cultural fit:
 - I. 60 min **cultural fit** interview with 2 leads
 - II. 60 min **technical** interview with 2-3 senior coders
- Problems:
 - Only **20%** of all failed candidates **don't pass** the **first** interview
 - Initial tech competence and seniority level estimates are way off!
 - **80%** of all failed candidates **don't pass** the **second** one
- Too much valuable time wasted

Previous Process 2/2

- Technical screening interview consisted of **questions** only
 - **Poor proxy** for ability to write real code
- Communication with the coders can be a **challenge**
 - Perception **biases**
 - Some of us are not great at **'selling'** ourselves well :)
 - Effects of **stress**

Solution Ideas

- Save time
 - Swap technical and cultural fit interviews?
 - Combine them?
 - If yes – how?
- Reduce human factor
 - Replace questions with practical exercises
- Action steps
 - Define priorities
 - Come up with an interview plan

Priorities & Order

1. Cultural fitness

- a) Interpersonal skills
- b) Interest in the project && the company

2. Technical evaluation

- a) General programming skills
- b) Specialisation
- c) C++ skills

- Long term
 - General
 - Harder to teach
 - Slower to evaluate!
 - ↓ ↓
 - Faster to evaluate!
 - Easier to teach
 - Specific
- Short term

Priorities → Plan

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 4. C++ skills | → | 1. C++ exercise |
| 2. General programming skills | → | 2. Follow-up questions |
| 3. Specialisation | → | 3. Specialisation exercise |
| 1. Cultural fit | → | 4. Personality profiling |
| | ↘ | 5. Candidate's questions |

■ C++ ■ Follow-up ■ Specialisation ■ Personality ■ Candidate's Qs



Magic Formula

- C++ exercise
 - Write a tiny bit of **useful** code
- Follow-up questions
 - Safety, performance, algorithm complexity, etc.
 - Evaluate **seniority** level
- Specialisation exercise
 - Evaluate area(s) of expertise

Results

- Success!
 - 80% of the failing candidates do so in the first 15 min
 - If the candidate passes the C++ exercise – stress levels go way down
 - With ½ time spent cultural fit is confidently evaluated
 - Practical exercises are fun!
 - Follow-up questions fuel engaging discussions
 - Confidence in technical evaluations significantly improved

Juniors & Seniors

- Mid-level **baseline**
- Juniors:
 - Focus less on **knowing** stuff
 - Focus more on **problem solving** / math
- Seniors:
 - **Same** structure but **longer** (~90 min)
 - More **complex** exercises / questions

Closing Notes

- Know your priorities
- Have a plan
- Experiment
- Remember – candidates are evaluating you too!

The End

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